

# ...The... McWilliams Special



It belongs to the stories that never were told, this of the McWilliams Special. But it happened years ago, and for that matter McWilliams is dead. It wasn't grief that killed him either, though at one time his grief came uncommonly near killing us.

It is an odd sort of a yarn, too, because one part of it never got to headquarters, and another part of it never got from headquarters.

How, for instance, the mysterious car was ever started from Chicago on such a delirious schedule, how many men in the service know that even yet?

How, for another instance, Sinclair and Francis took the ratty old car reeling into Denver with the glass shivered, the paint blistered, the hose burned and a tire sprung on one of the Five-Nine's drivers, how many headquarters slaves know that?

Our end of the story never went in at all—never went in because it was not deemed—well, essential to the getting up of the annual report. We could have raised their hair; they could have raised our salaries; but they didn't; we didn't.

In telling this story I would not be misunderstood. Ours is not the only line between Chicago and Denver. There are others, I admit it. But there is only one line, all the same, that could have taken the McWilliams Special, as we did, out of Chicago at 4 in the evening and put it in Denver long before noon the next day.

A communication came from a great La Salle street banker to the president of our road. Next the second vice president heard of it, but in this way:

"Why have you turned down Peter McWilliams' request for a special to Denver this afternoon?" asked the president.

"He wants too much," came back over the private wire. "We can't do it."

After satisfying himself on this point the president called up La Salle street. "Our folks say, Mr. McWilliams, we simply can't do it."

"You must do it."

"When will the car be ready?"

"At 3 o'clock."

"When must it be in Denver?"

"Ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

The president nearly jumped the wire.

"McWilliams, you're crazy. What on earth do you mean?"

The talk came back so low that the wires hardly caught it. There were occasional outbursts such as, "Situation is extremely critical," "Grave danger," "Acute distress," "Must help me out."

But none of this would ever have moved the president had not Peter McWilliams been a bigger man than most corporations, and a personal request from Peter, if he stuck for it, could hardly be refused, and for this he most decidedly stuck.

"I tell you it will turn us upside down," stormed the president.

"Do you recollect," asked Peter McWilliams, "when your infernal old pot

to the stockholders? Not so. It belongs to men like Mr. McWilliams, who own it when they need it. At other times they let the stockholders carry it—until they want it again.

"We'll do what we can, Peter," replied the president, desperately amiable. "Goodbye."

I am giving you only an inkling of how it started, not a word as to how countless orders were issued and countless schedules were canceled, not a paragraph about numberless trains abandoned in toto and numberless others pulled and hauled and held and annulled. The McWilliams Special in a twinkling tore a great system into great splinters.

It set master mechanics by the ears and made reckless falsifiers of previously conservative trainmen. It made undying enemies of rival superintendents and incipient parities of jolly train dispatchers. It shivered us from end to end and stem to stern, but it covered 1,026 miles of the best steel in the world in rather better than twenty hours and a blaze of glory.

"My word is out," said the president in his message to all superintendents thirty minutes later. "You will get your division schedule in a few moments. Send no reasons for inability to make it. Simply deliver the goods. With your time report, which comes by Dy. M. S., I want the name and record of every member of every train crew and every engine crew that hauls the McWilliams car." Then followed particular injunctions of secrecy. Above all, the newspapers must not get it.

But where newspapers are secrecy can only be hoped for, never attained. In spite of the most elaborate precautions to preserve Peter McWilliams' secret—would you believe it?—the evening papers had half a column, practically the whole thing. Of course they had to guess at some of it, but for a newspaper story it was pretty correct. Just the same. They had to a minute the time of the start from Chicago and hinted broadly that the schedule was a hair-raiser, something to make previous very fast records previous very slow records. And—here in a second—was the secret—the train was to carry a prominent Chicago capitalist to the bedside of his dying son, Philip McWilliams, in Denver. Further, that hourly bulletins were being wired to the distressed father and that every effort of science would be put forth to keep the unhappy boy alive until his father could reach Denver on the special. Lastly, it was hoped by all the evening papers (to fill out the half column secret) that sunrise would see the anxious parent well on toward the gateway of the Rockies.

Of course the morning papers from the Atlantic to the Pacific had the story repeated—scare headed, in fact—and the public were laughing at our people's dogged refusal to confirm the report or to be interviewed at all on the subject. The papers had the story anyway. What did they care for our efforts to screen a private distress which insisted on so paralyzing a time card for 1,026 miles?

When our own, the west end of the schedule, came over the wires there was a universal, a vociferous, kick. Dispatchers, superintendent of motive power, train master, everybody, protested. We were given about seven hours to cover 400 miles—the fastest percentage, by the way, on the whole run.

"This may be grief for young McWilliams and for his dad," grumbled the chief dispatcher that evening as he cribbed the press dispatches going over the wires about the special, "but the grief is not theirs alone."

Then he made a protest to Chicago. What the answer was none but himself ever knew. It came personal, and he took it personally, but the manner in which he went to work clearing track and making a card for the McWilliams Special showed better speed than the train itself ever attempted, and he kicked no more.

After all the row it seems incredible, but they never got ready to leave Chicago till 4 o'clock, and when the McWilliams Special lit into our train system it was like dropping a mountain lion into a bunch of steers.

Freights and extras, local passenger trains even, were used to being sidetracked, but when it came to laying out the fliers and (I whisper this) the White Mail and the Manila express the all began to sizzle in the journal boxes. The freight business, the passenger traffic, the mail schedules of a whole railway system were actually knocked by the McWilliams Special into a cocked hat.

From the minute it cleared Western avenue it was the only thing talked of. Divisional headquarters and car tink shanties alike were bursting with excitement.

On the West End we had all night to prepare, and at 5 o'clock next morning every man in the operating department was on edge. At precisely 3:58 a. m. the McWilliams Special stuck its nose into our division, and Foley—pulled off No. 1 with the 406—was heading her lizzy for McCloud. Already the McWilliams had made up thirty-one minutes on the one hour delay in Chicago, and Lincoln threw her into our hands

with a sort of "There now, you fellows! Are you any good at all on the West End?" And we thought we were.

Sitting in the dispatcher's office, we tagged her down the line like a swallow—Harvard, Oxford, Zanesville, Ash-ton—and a thousand people at the McCloud station waited for 6 o'clock and for Foley's mucky cap to pop through the Blackwood bluffs, watched him stain the valley maples with a stream of white and black, scream at the junction switches, tear and crash through the yards and slide hissing and panting up under our nose, swing out of his cab and look at nobody at all but his watch.

We made it 5:59 a. m., Central time; the miles, 136; the minutes, 121. The schedule was beaten and that with the 136 miles the fastest on the whole 1,026. Everybody in town yelled except Foley. He asked for a chew of tobacco and, not getting one handily, bit into his own piece.

While Foley melted his weed George Sinclair stepped out of the superintendent's office—he was done in a black silk shirt, with a blue four-in-hand streaming over his front—stepped out to shake hands with Foley as one buster got the 406 out of the way and another backed down with a new skyscraper, the 509.

But nobody paid much attention to all this. The mob had swarmed around the ratty, old, blind eyed baggage car which, with an ordinary way car, constituted the McWilliams Special.

"Now, what does a man with McWilliams' money want to travel special in an old photograph gallery like that for?" asked Andy Cameron, who was the least bit buffed because he hadn't been marked up for the run himself. "You better take him in a cup of hot coffee, Sinkers," suggested Andy to the lunch counter boy. "You might get a ten dollar bill if the old man isn't feeling too badly. What do you hear from Denver, Neighbor?" he asked, turning to the superintendent of motive power. "Is the boy holding out?"

"I'm not worrying about the boy holding out; it's whether the Five-Nine will hold out."

"Aren't you going to change engines and crews at Arickaree?"

"Not today," said Neighbor grimly. "We haven't time."

Just then Sinkers rushed at the baggage car with a cup of hot coffee for Mr. McWilliams. Everybody, hoping to get a peek at the capitalist, made way. Sinkers climbed over the train chests which were lashed to the platforms and pounded on the door. He pounded hard, for he hoped and believed that there was something in it. But he might have pounded till his coffee froze for all the impression it made on the sleepy McWilliams.

"Hasn't the man trouble enough without tacking your chieftain?" sang out Felix Kennedy, and the laugh so discouraged Sinkers that he gave over and sneaked away.

At that moment the editor of the local paper came around the depot corner on the run. He was out for an interview and, as usual, just a trifle late. However, he insisted on boarding the baggage car to tender his sympathy to McWilliams.

The barricades bothered him, but he mounted them all and began an emergency pound on the forbidding blind door. Imagine his feelings when the door was gently opened by a sad eyed man, who opened the ball by shoving a rifle as big as a pinch bar under the editorial nose.

"My grief, Mr. McWilliams," protested the interviewer in a trembling voice, "don't imagine I want to hold you up. Our citizens are all peaceable."

"Get out!"

"Why, man, I'm not even asking for a subscription. I simply want to tell—"

"Get out!" snapped the man with the gun, and in a foam the newsman climbed down. A curious crowd gathered close to hear an editorial version of the Ten Commandments revised on the spur of the moment. Felix Kennedy said it was worth going miles to hear. "That's the coldest deal I ever struck on the plains, boys," declared the editor. "Talk about your peaceable parents. If the boy doesn't have a chill when that man reaches him I miss my guess. He acts to me as if he was afraid his grief would get away before he got to Denver."

Meantime Georgie Sinclair was trying a silk handkerchief around his neck, while Neighbor gave him parting injunctions. As he put up his foot to swing into the cab the boy looked for all the world like a jockey, toe in stirrup. Neighbor glanced at his watch. "Can you make it by 11 o'clock?" he growled.

"Make what?"

"Denver or the ditch, Neighbor," laughed Georgie, testing the air. "Are you right back there, Pat?" he called as Conductor Francis strode forward to compare the mountain time.

"Right and tight, and I call it five-thirty now. What have you, Georgie?"

"Five-thirty-two," answered Sinclair, leaning from the cab window. "And we're ready."

"Then go!" cried Pat Francis, raising two fingers.

"Go!" echoed Sinclair, and waved a backward smile to the crowd as the pistons took the push and the escapes wheezed.

A roar went up. The little engineer shook his cap, and with a flitting, snaking slide the McWilliams Special drew slipping away between the shining rails for the Rockies.

Just how McWilliams felt we had no means of knowing, but we knew our hearts would not beat freely until his eternal special should slide safely over the last of the 266 miles which

commissioner's sale.

A. J. Graves etc Plff. vs Virginia Graves etc Dft. Equity

By virtue of a judgment and Order of Sale of the Crittenden Circuit Court, rendered at the March Term thereof, 1907, in the above cause, I shall proceed to offer for sale at the Court-house door in Marion to the highest bidder, at Public Auction, Monday the 13th day of May 1907 at 1 o'clock P. M. or thereabout, (being Court day), upon a credit of six months, the following described property, to wit:

A certain house and lot near Dycusburg, Crittenden county Ky., containing 7 1/2 acres and bounded as follows beginning on the Eddyville road and comes to Mrs. Cooksey thence with her line N 60 E 36 poles to her corner a stake thence with another line of her's S 18 E 25 poles to a stake on side of road thence N 55 E 56 poles to old line of Jacobs thence with same N 89 W 62 poles to a stake on Eddyville road, thence with said road S 31 1/2 W 19 poles, thence S 14 W 22 poles to the beginning.

For the purchase price the purchaser, with approved security or securities, must execute Bond, bearing legal interest from the day of sale until paid, and having the force and effect of a judgment. Bidders will be prepared to comply promptly with these terms.

J. G. ROCHESTER, Commissioner.

commissioner's sale.

Joe L. Clinton, Plff vs Jas. F. Cook, et al, Dft. Equity.

By virtue of a Judgement and Order of Sale of the Crittenden Circuit Court, rendered at the March Term thereof, 1907, in the above cause for the sum of \$3,513.68 with interest at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum from the 25 day of August 1906 on \$1451 and interest on remainder from November 25, 1902, until paid, and \$250 costs herein, I shall proceed to offer for sale at the Court-house door in Marion to the highest bidder, at Public Auction, on Monday the 13th day of May 1907, at 1 o'clock P. M., or thereabout, (being Court day) upon a credit of six, twelve and eighteen months, the following described property, to wit:

A certain tract of land situated in Crittenden county, Ky., and known as the John Walter Cook farm, near Mattoon. This farm is situated within two miles of Repton, on the I. C. R. R. and within six miles of Weston, on the Ohio River, and lies on the old Fynn's ferry road between said points, and is in a fine state of cultivation, with good improvements and well watered, and contains 180 acres.

Or sufficient thereof to produce the sums of money so ordered to be made. For the purchase price the purchaser, with approved security or securities, must execute bond, bearing legal interest from the day of sale until paid, and having the force and effect of a judgment. Bidders will be prepared to comply promptly with these terms.

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Three mules, one horse and one log wagon, all sound and in good fix.

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J. G. ROCHESTER, Commissioner.

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By virtue of taxes due Marion Graded Common School District No 27 of Crittenden county Kentucky. I will on Monday May 13th, 1907, between the hours of 10 o'clock a. m. and 2 o'clock p. m. expose to public sale, to the highest bidder for cash in hand, the following property, for so much thereof as may be necessary, to satisfy the amount of the taxes due and costs, and assessed in the following names to wit:

Brown Emily, one house and lot in Marion, Ky., taxes for 1903-4-5 and 6 \$4.20

Beard Geo. A. one house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1905 and 1906 6.35

Bell John W. one house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1903-4-5 and 6 13.52

Glore Minner, taxes for 1903-4-5 and 6 16.15

Weldon S. M. one house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1906, 8.10

Whitehouse C. H. one house and lot in Marion Ky on the north side of Carlisle St. and known as the Record building taxes for 1906 15.15

Watson W. Hugh one house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1906 4.15

Dollins Nelle house and lot in Marion Ky taxes, for 1904-5-6 12.10

Givens J. W. house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1904-5-6 25.95

Henry James S. house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1906 9.40

Henry Albert M. house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1904-5-6 7.80

Henry S. N. house and lot in Marion Ky taxes for 1905-6 11.45

H. A. HAYNES Treasurer, Marion Graded Common School Dist. No. 27 This April 1st, 1907.

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H. A. HAYNES Treasurer, Marion Graded Common School Dist. No. 27 This April 1st, 1907.

## COMMISSIONER'S SALE.

D. T. White, Plff. vs A. J. Grant, etc., Dft. Equity.

By virtue of a Judgment and Order of Sale of the Crittenden Circuit Court, rendered at the March Term thereof, 1907, in the above cause for the sum of \$300 with interest at 6 per cent. per annum from the 8 day of Oct. 1902, until paid, and \$50 costs herein, I shall proceed to offer for sale at the Court-house door in Marion to the highest bidder, at Public Auction, on Monday the 13th day of May, 1907, at 1 o'clock P. M., or thereabout, (being Court day), upon a credit of six months, the following described property to wit:

A certain tract of land lying and being in the county of Crittenden and state of Kentucky and being the same tract of land purchased by A. J. Grant from J. B. McKinley on the 8th day of Oct. 1902. See deed recorded in deed book 13, page 159, in the office of the Clerk of the Crittenden County Court. Said land is bounded as follows:

Beginning on a white oak corner T. W. Hughes, thence S. 20, E. 26 poles to a hickory, thence N. 83, E. 26 poles to a stone, thence S. 64, E. 56 poles to a stone at the North corner of the lane, thence N. 15, E. 48 poles to a white oak, thence 16 E. 94 poles to a stake, thence 75 W. 20 poles to a small black oak (now down), thence W. 54 poles to a poplar, thence about South and about 12 poles to a white oak and hickory, thence S. 60, W. 15 poles to a white oak, thence S. 22, W. 44 poles to beginning containing 57 acres.

Or sufficient thereof to produce the sums of money so ordered to be made. For the purchase price the purchaser, with approved security or securities, must execute Bond, bearing legal interest from the day of sale until paid, and having the force and effect of a Judgment. Bidders will be prepared to comply with these terms.

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